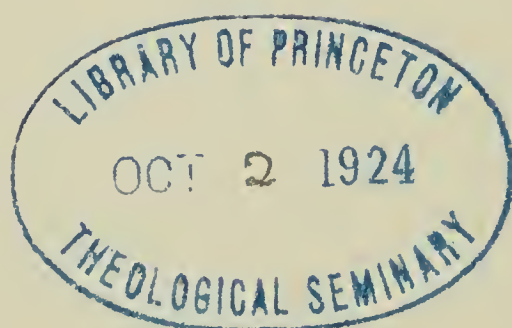
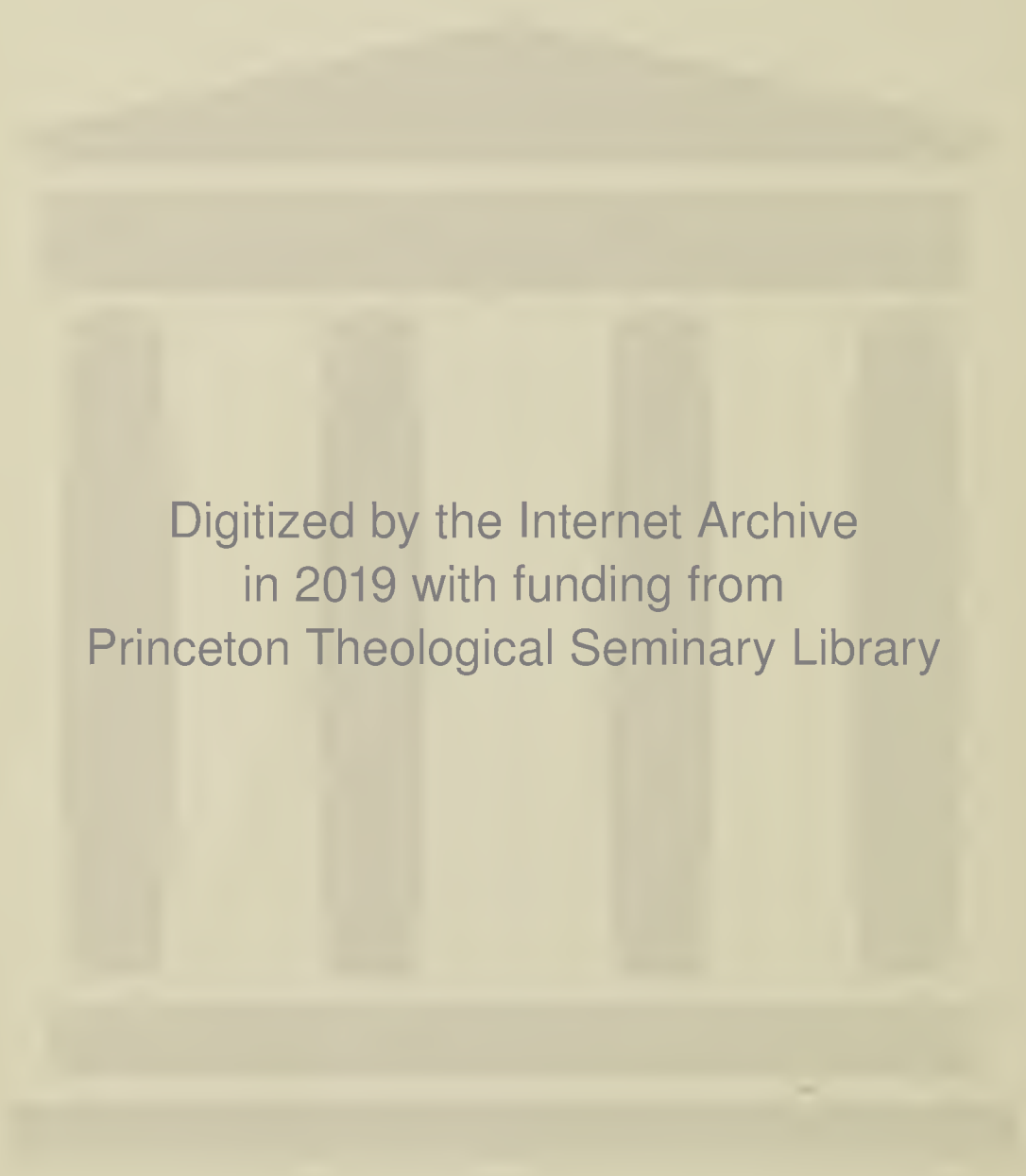


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**BUDDHISM AND BUDDHISTS
IN SOUTHERN ASIA**

THE WORLD'S LIVING RELIGIONS

EDITED BY
FRANK KNIGHT SANDERS
and
HARLAN PAGE BEACH

A series of concise yet reliable presentations of the actual religious life of the non-Christian peoples of today and of Christianity's approach to them

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS

BUDDHISM *and* BUDDHISTS IN SOUTHERN ASIA



BY

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PREFACE

This little volume, in a much shorter form, was prepared early in 1921 by Professor Saunders in response to an invitation from an editorial committee, representing the Board of Missionary Preparation of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. Being unavoidably delayed in publication in North America, it was released for publication as Part I of "Buddhism in the Modern World," published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, England. As now issued, however, the material has been so thoroughly revised and enlarged that it may fairly be regarded as another presentation of the theme.

Like the other volumes in the series on the World's Living Religions, it aims to introduce Western readers to the real religious life of each great region of the non-Christian world, in order that they may come to understand its hold upon the people of that area. Such a religion must minister in some degree, however imperfectly, to their religious needs, or it would not retain its place of influence. Missionaries, in particular, need this understanding. One who comes to realize and to appreciate the extent and the quality of the service which a non-Christian religion renders is a far abler interpreter of Christianity to the people professing that religion than one who approaches them with no adequate conception of their expression of religious feeling and with something of the attitude of a crusader.

Professor Saunders spent over ten years in quite intimate contact with the Buddhist peoples of Southern and

Eastern Asia. This contact brought him into a close acquaintance with the real leaders of Buddhism. It has given him a friendly viewpoint and a vividness in interpretation which all who seek to know more about Buddhism and Buddhists will welcome. He emphasizes its strong features but only to voice his own conviction that these are a means of opening a pathway from Buddhism to Christianity.

Modern missions have proved abundantly the value of the sympathetic approach. The missionary may always be candid; but he does not have to assume an attitude of criticism or of hostility. Christianity may virtually annihilate a South Sea Islander's superstitions; it cannot succeed in setting aside an historical religion, like Buddhism or Islam, by any such process. It conquers by comparison, and by showing that it fulfils the best aspirations of such religions. The followers of Christ can afford to recognize fully the truths that lie at the heart of every great religion and the elements which nurture the religiously-minded among its adherents, for Christ, when recognized, is able to give them yet more abundant light and life.

The purpose of each volume in this series is impressionistic rather than definitely educational. This volume on the Buddhism of Southern Asia is in no sense intended to serve as a basis for the formal study of Buddhism. For such study it provides amply through the selected literature referred to in the Appendix. It rather aims to kindle a genuine and growing interest in the active phases of Buddhism in Southeastern Asia, so that its readers will wish to study this religion more in detail. The discriminating reader will be helped by it to think in terms of an adherent or a devotee of Buddhism. It likewise aims to make a fair comparison of such Buddhism with religion as it is found in Jesus Christ.

Buddhism, whatever its drawbacks, undoubtedly includes among its adherents many serene and happy souls. They live an idealistic life, despite the tendencies about them which destroy ideals. Christianity ought to make a strong appeal to such partially enlightened minds, robbing them of no light-heartedness, but promoting a broader, truer, better balanced attitude toward life, a nobler conception of God and His world, a stronger sense of sinfulness, and a truer conception of their own relation to things divine and to one another.

It is our hope that this uniquely fresh contribution to the understanding of Buddhism as it is today may be found helpful to a large circle of readers.

THE EDITORS

New York City
January, 1923.

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**BUDDHISM AND BUDDHISTS
IN SOUTHERN ASIA**

BUDDHISM AND BUDDHISTS IN SOUTHERN ASIA

I

INTRODUCTORY

BUDDHISM, like Christianity and Islam, is the religion of more than one people. It holds sway over a very large part of the human race today, and aims at becoming universal. Some writers do not hesitate to say that its adherents number one half of the teeming millions of Asia, and one third of the population of the globe. From its beginning, more than twenty-four centuries ago, until now, Buddhism has been an Asiatic religion. Though the India which gave it birth has only a negligible number of Buddhists at the present time, yet in Ceylon to the south, in Burma, Siam and eastward to the China Sea, and in Nepal, Tibet and far beyond to the utmost limits of Mongolia, Korea, China and Japan Buddhism is the ruling religion of the peoples.

Buddhism, like Christianity, is a religion which gets its hold upon men through its idealism. It demands moral conduct and concerns itself with the hereafter. It looks upon human life as a time of discipline or preparation and of growth. It is a serious rival of Christianity because in some respects, when at its best, it is found to resemble Christianity.

Buddhism is not everywhere the same. Quite early in

its history it developed two schools of interpretation. One of them which looks on immediate salvation as attainable by all who sincerely seek it calls itself *Mahāyāna* or the "Great Vehicle." It is the type of Buddhism which prevails in Tibet, Mongolia, China and Japan. The other type is called by this school the *Hinayāna* or "Little Vehicle," for it tends to restrict present salvation to a select few. Of this latter type is the Buddhism of Southeastern Asia. In their general attitude toward life and the future the two schools agree, though the *Mahāyāna* makes more of Paradise than of Nirvāna and regards the monk seeking his own salvation as selfish.

The people of Southeastern Asia are religious. The Burmese especially take their religion seriously yet very happily. The endless series of acts of devotion demanded by Buddhism do not seem to be regarded as an unmitigated burden, but rather, in some respects at least, as adding to the joy of life. To appreciate the real part which the religion plays in the everyday life of a Buddhist community requires sympathetic and painstaking consideration.

II

BUDDHISM IN BURMA

1. *At the Great Pagoda in Rangoon*

APPROACHING the city of Rangoon, the famous capital of Burma, the attention of a newcomer will at once be drawn to the stately and splendid structure, rising high above the city itself, which typifies the ascendancy of the Buddhist faith and gives glorious expression to its hold upon the Burman people. This is the great Shwe Dagon pagoda, whose golden spire amid a splendid grove of palms and forest trees rises high above a vast platform, acres in extent, crowded with rococo shrines and jewelled images of the Buddha. "On entering the platform one feels that he has passed suddenly from this life into another and different world. It is not, perhaps, a very elevated world; certainly not the final repose of the just or the steps of the throne of God, but it does seem as if you were walking in the bazaars of Paradise." Far below this strange medley and its weird charm lies the city with its teeming multitudes, humming with life and busied with the never-ending struggle for existence. Rising in solemn majesty, disturbed only by the rustling of leaves or the tinkling of innumerable bells, soars the great pagoda pinnacle, wonderful as a work of art, no less remarkable as a symbol of the majestic dominance of a faith in things unseen. One who climbs the long flight of steps, lined with tiers of little shops selling flowers and candles and little images of Buddha, stands on that great

raised court at the base of the pagoda, and enters into the spirit of the scene before him will speedily realize the phases, good and bad, of everyday Buddhism in Burma.

(a) *A Monastic School*.—Among the confusion of sounds made by the thronging worshippers, the visitor may have his attention drawn by the shouting of a class of thirty or forty boys in the monastery school which is a part of the pagoda group. These pupils will be seated on the floor or on the steps around a kindly-looking old monk dressed in a faded yellow robe. He acts as a precentor, announcing a word or phrase which they repeat in unison, shouting at the top of their voices. First, he pronounces a word of Pali¹ which they repeat; then the same word is repeated in Burmese; and, when a phrase has been completed, the whole of it is shouted through. The phrases must be droned through many times, until they are learned by heart; they are seldom or never understood; yet the teacher from time to time furnishes simple explanations and grammatical notes which help his pupils to appreciate the meaning of what they have memorized. Thus, in the course of time, the teachings sink into their minds, and so strong is the appeal to their imagination in the outward forms of their religion that many are soon made staunch and intelligent Buddhists.

(b) *Its Moral Teaching*.—A little inquiry enables the curious listener to reach the conclusion that these phrases, which the boys shout so lustily, are taken from a very popular and valuable Buddhist booklet known as *Mangala Thot*. It is a summary in poetical phrases of the Buddhist beatitudes, which describe the life the loyal Buddhist layman ought to lead, if he desires happiness. There are twelve couplets, of which the following are typical:

¹ The ancient and still the classic language of Southern Buddhism, in which its Scriptures are preserved. Pali is used religiously in Buddhist services, much as Latin is used in Roman Catholic services.

Tend parents, cherish wife and child,
Pursue a blameless life and mild;
Do good, shun ill and still beware
Of the red wine's insidious snare;
Be humble, with thy lot content,
Grateful and ever reverent.

These teachings are not deeply philosophical, but rather social and ethical. They deal plainly with life and its duties in a simple and straightforward fashion, something after the style of the Book of Proverbs. All Oriental peoples dearly love sententious sayings in poetical form; and Gotama,¹ the founder of Buddhism, used this method of imparting truth along with parables and fables.

(c) *Its Religious Instruction*.—Buddhism is not only a body of moral teachings, but also a religion with an elaborate system of beliefs which make very real demands upon the faith of its worshippers. The *Mangala Thot* itself ends with references to *Nibbāna*² and its peace and other beliefs are embodied in the *Jātakas*, a strange medley of folklore dressed up in Buddhist guise, and purporting to be stories of the various lives or existences of Sākyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, before he became the Buddha or the “enlightened one.” Other beliefs are conveyed in legends and hymns, in popular summaries and in proverbial sayings which are in universal use. It is the duty of the old monk or *Hponggi* to introduce his pupils to this store of religious knowledge and faith, which is at his own tongue's end. He may take for a lesson a short summary of the excellences of the “Three Jewels” of Buddhism, the Buddha himself, the Order of monks and the Law or teachings which have been put into definite form. Or he may choose another collection which cele-

¹ Gotama is the Pali form of the Sanskrit Gautama, more familiar to Western readers. Burmese call him Gaudama.

² Sanskrit Nirvāna, literally “blown out,” the attainment of a state of beatitude through extinction of *Tanhā* or craving.

brates in verse the eight victories of the Buddha over his temporal and spiritual enemies. Some of these teachings call for a big act of faith! When the boys have mastered these preliminary books and the ideas contained in them, they are ready to take up for study the chief *Jātakas* in more detail.

These feed their growing hero-worship and give them an understanding of the mission of the Buddha, of the way in which he became enlightened, and of what it meant for mankind. They next acquire a mastery of the proper details of worship and all the other varied kinds of knowledge which will prepare them to play their part in the social and religious life of their country. They take it all very seriously, for Buddhism is "Burma custom."

(d) *The Importance of the Monks.*—This class of boys around the old teacher represents a system of religious education which covers all Burma and exerts unbounded influence. It is an astonishing fact that there is an average of almost two monasteries to every village in Burma. They are a feature of the landscape, not towering to a great height, like Shwe Dagon, and seldom decorated, like that great pagoda, with gold leaf, but of white or brick-red color with a short golden spike on top or a canopy of bells that rattle in the wind. Most of them are in disrepair. Only in the case of certain larger sanctuaries, held in special veneration is it an act of merit to give funds for upkeep. Repairs do not count, as a rule. Instead a devotee prefers to build a new pagoda. While the monasteries and temples constitute an enormous drain upon the resources of the country, since it is the established custom that no monks shall take any part in the active industrial life of the country, but live upon the alms of the laity, the system which they represent has, on the other hand, made Burma one of the most literate of all the lands of the East, with a larger percentage of men who

can read and write than will be found in modern Italy, a result which is of real significance. The importance and the influence of the monks is very great indeed.

The Order of monks stands apart from the rest of the people. So markedly is this the case that every adolescent boy is obliged to spend a certain time under the entire control of the monastic order and to go through some simple form of ordination. Till then he is not considered a full-fledged human being. He is not forced to remain with his new associates out of the world, but the Order thereby obtains a very great advantage in reaching out after the youths its members really desire to impress and to retain.

Under the circumstances it is not at all strange that many of them are caught by the lure of the monastic life and the glamour of the yellow robe. Yet most of them, naturally, after a short experience, go back to the normal life of the world, which seems in Burma very happy, colorful and richly varied.

The young *shin*, or novice, who chooses to remain in a monastery, may in due course become a recognized member of the monastic order. His ordination is a great occasion for all who know him, especially for his family. At that time, dressed in princely robes, he celebrates the sacrifice of the founder of Buddhism, Sākyamuni, who abandoned his royal state to become a mendicant. The whole of that famous scene is reproduced. The head of the candidate is shaved and his gorgeous raiment is taken away; henceforth he will go clad only in the yellow robe of the Buddhist monks, an Order older, more widespread and more picturesque than any other religious order in the world. Observers now say of him that he has "taken refuge in the Three Jewels." Henceforth he follows the regular life of the monk. Daily, with a group of others, he goes out to collect food for the monastery; as a junior he attends to the various needs of the older monks; he takes his

share of the simple household tasks in the monastery. A large portion of his time, however, must be given to his studies, until he has a good working knowledge of the three "Baskets"¹ which make up the Buddhist Canon, i.e., the Discipline, the Narratives or Dialogues, and the Higher Religion. If he is diligent in the performance of all these varied duties, he will in course of time receive the honor of being designated as a teacher, not alone to groups of boys, but among the people. Such teachers are held in high esteem.

(e) *The Worshipping Throng*.—Day is drawing to its close. The great sun is going down and the pagoda, splendid in the sunset, as it changes from gold to purple and from purple to gray and then, in the tropical moonlight, to silver, is thronged with devout worshippers. The teacher permits his boys to disperse to their homes; but he prostrates himself before the jewelled, alabaster image of the Buddha. He acts quite unaware of the people who cluster around him, paying him reverence as a being of a superior order. If he shows any consciousness of them at all, it accents his keen sense of his own aloofness and dignity. He is murmuring over and over again: *Sabbā dukkhā*, "all is sorrow"; *Sabbā anattā*, "all is without abiding entity." Mechanically, the lay-folk repeat after him these phrases which have been for twenty-five centuries the Buddhist challenge to the world of men, calling them away from the lure of the senses and from the social ties of home and community to the monastic life. They seem to do this with great devoutness. How much it really means to each one of them is one of the questions which

¹The *Tipitaka* (Sanskrit, *Tripitika*), i.e. (1) *Vinaya*; (2) *Sutta*; (3) *Abhidhamma*. One explanation of the use of the term "baskets" is that the Pali Scriptures were originally written on palm leaves and preserved, layer upon layer, properly sorted, in them. Another explanation claims that the Buddhist Scriptures were handed on from scholar to scholar as baskets of earth or of bricks are handed on along a line of laborers. Neither may be correct.

puzzle the onlooker in a Buddhist country. It is hard to think these gay human butterflies mean that the world is sad and transient, for it seems to satisfy them abundantly. Yet sorrow lurks at hand for them, as for us.

(f) *Women at Worship*.—One way of testing the reality behind these repetitions is to watch a group of women before one of the many shrines on the spacious pagoda platform. Here kneels a young wife offering strands of her hair, and praying that her child may have hair as long and beautiful. Near by is an unhappy wife who prays that her husband may become as pure as the flower which she lays at the feet of the Buddha. The Burmese pray for help in matters of daily life just as people do everywhere, unperturbed by the question whether life is transient and sad in character or really worth the living. Not far away is another characteristic sight. One very old and trembling woman, having bowed to the huge impassive image of the Buddha and lighted her little candle before it, turns back to pat an ancient and beautiful tree, fearing lest the *nat*, the spirit which lives within the tree, should be offended by any lack of attention from her. Her point of view is expressed in the common saying: "The spirits are always malignant and have to be propitiated. The world-renowned One, is he not benign?" The Burman takes naturally to such double loyalty, which has existed for hundreds of years. He strives to keep the demands of the Buddha in mind and, no less, the demands of the spirits who are always hovering about. He serves them both faithfully, thinking that each has a share in making this life pleasant. He is most keenly anxious to placate those demons or spirits who, as he thinks, confer many benefits upon men when properly treated, but are capable, if slighted, of swift and terrible vengeance. Probably in every village in the land there will be found at least one pagoda and monastery where the worship of

Buddha is regularly carried on. But there is sure to be a spirit-shrine in every home. Before a new home is built or a marriage is arranged in the family, or purchases are made, or journeys are undertaken, in fact in advance of every important undertaking, the proper spirits are carefully consulted and appeased. No one can really enter into the daily life of the Burmese people without realizing the very definite share attributed to the spirits round about. These beliefs hark back, of course, to the primitive days before Buddhism was adopted. They are the heritage of the earlier animism which seems to have spread widely over Asia. Since the spirits are concerned only with everyday affairs, the Burmese find little difficulty in recognizing them along with the requirements of Buddhism. Christianity, of course, tends to rid people of such superstitions, but even in Christendom there are still those to be found who avoid the number thirteen, and the slightly educated masses of some Christian lands believe in demons and ghosts. Burma has been called the Ireland of Asia and not merely because of the cheerful inconsequence of its people!

2. *The Religious Values of Everyday Buddhism*

It must not be inferred from this reference to the influence of animistic beliefs that Buddhism is a purely formal religion. It weaves itself also intimately into the daily life of the people. In Burma, as elsewhere, the strongest appeal of organized religion is to the women. Their fidelity forms the rocklike foundation on which rests the great power of the monks. It will be of interest, therefore, to consider what Buddhism offers to Burmese women.

(a) *What Buddhism Means to Burmese Women.*—Buddhism makes its appeal to the women of Burma in at least five ways. In the first place, Buddhism is a strong social force, providing many festivals and giving all kinds of

color to everyday life. While in theory it may be sad, in practice it is very cheerful. The Burmese women throw themselves into its festivals with keen enthusiasm. They delight to gather on the platform of the beautiful pagoda for friendly intercourse and gossip, to go to the funerals of the monks and to join in the frolic of the festivals. Buddhism thus provides in a natural way the social interchange of common interests and the relief from the pressure of everyday duties which all intelligent beings crave.

Another great source of enjoyment and instruction, enlarging and brightening everyday life, is provided by Buddhism in the universal custom of telling over and over again the well-known stories about the Buddha and the embryo Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. These stories often contain the miraculous; they always have a moral value. One of the story-pictures in which the women take great delight tells how Gotama when he was a hare jumped into the fire to feed a hungry Brahmin. Another picture, more familiar and more poignant still, depicts his appearance as Prince Vessantara, giving away his wife and beloved children to a hunchback beggar, that he might win through to *Nibbāna*. These stories exert an immense influence toward inculcating a spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice. Moreover, no woman would question the husband's right to dispose of his family in this way! All these stories are a part of the Buddhist scheme of public religious training, which is admirably adapted to kindle the imagination and to inspire devotion.

Again, Burmese women have great reverence for the Order of monks and all that it represents. How wise and good and holy these men seem to them to be! "Are they not custodians of the truth?" one woman says to another. "Yes, and the harvest-field of merit (*Kutho*)" she replies. The women cheerfully obey the commands laid upon them by these men. On the great pagoda platform

one may see a little woman lifting a heavy stone which weighs probably forty pounds. Some monk had told her that, if it seems heavy and hard to manage, her prayers will surely be answered. To make assurance doubly sure, she may also go and consult the soothsayer, whose little booth is near the shrine,—a cheerful rogue, not without insight and a sense of humor. Whatever he may say, however, she attributes to the monk the supreme place of authority and pays him more generously. A Burman student who was converted to Christianity was asked by an old lady why he had deserted the “custom” of his people. “I am sick,” he began, “of all this bowing down to the monks, and of all these offerings.” “Stop, stop,” she cried aghast, “you’re destroying the whole religion of our nation!”

Again, the Burmese women think of the monks as giving them the best chance to gain “merit.” They are glad to remember that the Buddha himself taught that generous offerings to his disciples, the monks, would be potent in securing all kinds of benefits in this world and even be of help to those who have passed into the dim life of the underworld. Consequently, it seems to them that the monks confer a favor by accepting alms; it is the donor who says, “Thank you,” and congratulates herself on acquiring some solid benefits for herself and for her dear ones.

And, finally, Buddhism influences Burmese women by appealing to their imagination and their love of the mysterious. The towering pagodas with their clustering shrines of Buddha, their innumerable candles twinkling in the dusk, the solemn chanting of the monks and their sexless sanctity, the endless repetition of prayers,—all these things make a very deep impression upon the worshippers, because they seem to lead the way to a life which is above and outside of the dull routine of daily duty. The

ceremonial side of Buddhism makes a deep impression upon the multitude, particularly in an Oriental land where emotionalism is easy and habitual. In Buddhism, therefore, as in other religions, the women form a mighty influence in favor of the ancient religious forms.

(b) *What it Means for Burmese Men.*—Laymen in Burma are much like men elsewhere. Religion has a strong hold upon some and very little influence over others. Not infrequently a jolly Burmese between prostrations before the image of Buddha will keep his long cheroot alive, enjoying an occasional puff. He is like many a man one meets, who aims to make the best of both worlds. To men of this type Buddhism never fails to make a strong appeal, particularly when contrasted with any other religion. Primarily, he will believe in Buddhism, because it is his heritage, or, as he says, "the custom of his people." The national feeling, which is alive in Burma, as well as in all other parts of the East, resents Western influences, among which it reckons Christianity. It should be said, moreover, that Buddhism strongly appeals to the Burmese habit of mind. It has been nationalized in Burma; in addition, it appeals to the reason. A Burman thinks that he fully understands why there is inequality in human lot, why some people are rich and others poor, why some are healthy and others foul with disease. He explains it as the working out of the law of *Kamma*.¹ Men suffer now because they have sinned at some earlier time, presumably in the life of a former birth. Listen to this conversation between two men. Old U Hpay is telling a neighbor about a foolish old sister of his who has adopted a calf and is petting it, because its voice is so like that of her dead husband. While the old men chuckle over her belief that her husband's spirit is reincarnated in this particular calf, yet they un-

¹ Sanskrit, *Karma*.

questioningly believe that a reincarnation of this kind is the law of life. If a man kills a mosquito he may, for all he knows, be murdering his mother-in-law in a new body! This belief does not always wear a ludicrous aspect; it has a strong logical basis.

Buddhism puts forth its greatest appeal to the Asiatic mind at those times when there comes over its votaries a wistful yearning for something which this world has not given them. Such moments come frequently in the evening of life, when men are no longer concerned with making money or with the raising of a family or with pushing their way into positions of influence. At such a time the appeal of *Nibbāna* and its peace comes home to many. They do not feel sure of reaching it, nor do they fully understand what it means. Some of their monkish teachers tell them it will mean annihilation, while others describe it as the extinction of all passion, or a great calm, or a paradise of sensual joys. In one or another way *Nibbāna*, as the great goal of life, has its lure, especially to the world-weary. A Christian missionary once told the writer that he was occasionally tempted in the staleness and hurry of life to long for the quiet and relief which annihilation would bring. Of course he was worn out under the pressure of his work and needed a holiday! Such a viewpoint seems unnatural to those of us who have been brought up in the Western world, but it is both real and attractive to the more dreamy Oriental.

(c) *Buddhism and Little Children*.—Playing around, while the old people talk or pray or listen, are always some children. Here one will see a fat, naked baby taking a puff at his grandfather's cigar; over there a little girl, imitating with devoutness what she sees her parents doing before the great image of Buddha, also takes delight in lighting her candle and in offering her marigolds. The older children quickly pick up their share in the religious

life going on about them. In some of the youth is dawning a sense of the worshipfulness of the great Buddha, who has done so much for the world. A little girl thinks wistfully of her brother, very recently her playmate, but now as remote from her and far away as if he belonged to another world, since he has become a Buddhist novice with shaved head and yellow robe. It is not customary to spend much time in teaching her and her girl playmates, "they are only girls!" But, as everywhere, these girls learn quickly by what they see and hear, and also tend to become staunch supporters of Buddhism. There are some very redoubtable champions of the religion among these children; and the girls grow up less instructed but not less partisan than the boys. Gratitude to the Buddha and a wondering sense of his greatness and power are theirs.

(d) *The Attitude of Educated Burmese.*—Thus it is that every Burmese mother desires that one of her sons shall take and keep the yellow robe; yet the younger among the educated Burmese are frank in calling the Order of monks a "yellow peril." This is not because they are men of evil life, for public opinion in Burma will not tolerate immorality in these religious leaders, but because there are so many of them, over seventy-five thousand in the whole country. Even to feed such a horde of mendicants is a costly business; while the building and the adorning of pagodas, which they are ever demanding as a meritorious act, may mean that the inheritance of every one belonging to some particular village will be seriously reduced. "The pagoda is built and the village ruined" is a proverb which they ruefully repeat. Among the students who are in the government schools, thus coming into some contact with the liberal thinking of the West, such facts as these are viewed with increasing unrest. They develop a disposition to question the real values of the present religious system. Possibly not more than ten per cent of the students who

have had Western training can be called genuine Buddhists. The old people to whom Buddhism means so much become increasingly anxious about this situation, while the young, especially the students, are growing restive. Burma, like many other countries, is thus going through a period of religious transition, the outcome of which is uncertain. It is, nevertheless, still a strongly Buddhist country, and the great masses of the people are not much affected by this spirit of educated skepticism.

There is another group, the officials, who are apt to pay little real heed to religious scruples, since they realize that Western education is the real key to preferment. They are slightly affected by much that their fathers would have held most sacred and important. Some try to re-think their way through their religion and to adjust it to modern ideas, but these men are exceptional.

(e) *The Better Side of Burmese Buddhism.*—Buddhism is often described as a pessimistic religion. This is certainly true in those countries where the surroundings encourage a dreary outlook on life. As one views Buddhism in Burma, however, it seems to make the people happy and contented. This result is quite possibly due to their naturally cheerful temperament. Whatever the real reason, there is remarkable joyousness about the gay-robed crowds of happy, smiling people, not alone on festal days but every day. They laugh and joke more than any other Oriental people.

Again, while Buddhism does not give womanhood as high a place as she finds under the influence of the teachings of Jesus, yet it has granted her a far better standing than she gains in any part of India under Hinduism, or in other parts of the world under Islam. In Burma woman, even though she may pray to be born the next time as a man, is the "better half"; and she acts the part, and makes the best of her lot.

Again that great curse of India, caste, is practically unknown to Buddhist Burma. Buddhism believes in the education of all classes and throws its schools and monasteries open to all boys and men. Ability is in a very true sense the secret of successful leadership. The spirit of the Burmese people is very tolerant and kindly. It has not led, on any large scale, either to religious persecution or to aggressive war. On the whole, Burma is a truly democratic land, as well as a cheerful one. These conditions represent services of no small importance, and, in all fairness, they should be credited to the account of Buddhism.

It would be fair to say that Buddhism has its full share in promoting the great awakening of the spirit of nationalism throughout Asia. In the past it has furnished a real bond of union, and is today perhaps the most deeply rooted bond that exists between many of the peoples of Asia. It is therefore eager to take an active part in the movement of "Asia for the Asiatics," which both deserves and demands the friendly attention of Western peoples. Along with the growth of nationalistic sentiment, a certain revival of Buddhism is to be anticipated, but this will not necessarily be permanent.

3. *Christianity's Progress in Burma*

While there are only some thirty thousand baptized Christians among the Burmese as yet, the number which is properly counted as virtually Christian within the confines of Burma amounts to six or seven times as many. The Karens, who are mountaineers of a non-Burmese race, dwelling in upper Burma, have already developed a great Church. These Christians, all taken together, however, are but few in comparison with the eleven millions of the population of the country. Yet there are reasons which point in the direction of Burma at some time becoming a

Christian country, although, necessarily, its Christianity will differ very greatly in type from that which prevails in the West.

(a) *The Burmese Are Naturally Religious.*—The natural instinct of the Burmese for religion is very strong. The people, lavish as they are with offerings and festivals and interested as they seem to be in the details of ritual, are not satisfied with these expressions of religious feeling. Gratitude to Gotama, the great Teacher and Lord, is a real motive in the lives and thoughts of many. It is quite interesting to note how many of our simple Christian hymns have been adopted and adapted by Buddhist leaders and put into common use by loyal Buddhists:

Glory, laud and honor
To our Lord and King,
This through countless ages,
Men and *Devas* sing.

This is not merely for the sake of competing with Christianity, but because such sentiments express the emotions of better Buddhist minds. These modern-minded Buddhists, unafraid of innovation, have not hesitated to organize Buddhist Sunday-schools. In these the children are not only taught in accordance with Protestant Sunday-school methods, but they sing to a small, portable harmonium our little children's hymns:

Buddha loves me, this I know;
For the Scriptures tell me so.

Even more commonly Burmese hymns and "carols" of their own invention are sung, which the children render with a will. All this, while sometimes perplexing to the missionary to find his methods so copied, goes far to indicate the real basis on which a future Christianity may rest. These methods are likely to help on the mission

cause, for indifference and materialism are far the greatest foes of the missionary.

(b) *They Tend to View Gotama as a Savior.*—Buddhism in many countries today is tending to resemble Christianity more closely than it resembles the Buddhism of Gotama and the elders. It is more of a religion of sympathy and service, and less of a philosophy than the Buddhism of the early Buddhist Scriptures. Especially among the more educated, who have come into some sort of contact with Christian ideas, very many are tending to carry Buddhism over from a way of merit and self-mastery into a way of salvation by faith. This is even true in Southern Asia, where “merit” is a word on every tongue. Gotama is reported by these Buddhists to have promised the coming of a redeemer. And there is a growing expectation and yearning for Him. When a father blesses his child, he is not unlikely to say to him: “May you be reborn when the Loving One, *Metteya*,¹ comes.” The more this tendency prevails, the easier may the transition be from Buddhism to real Christianity. Its prevalence suggests that the old religion is failing to satisfy its best adherents.

(c) *The Christian Heaven Is More Attractive than Nibbāna.*—Another noticeable fact, clear to many students of Buddhism, is that Buddhists today are much more ready than previously to accept the idea of a Christian heaven. This heaven, represented as a state of progress, a meeting place of friends, and an opportunity for the beatific vision of God, is very attractive to them. The appeal of *Nibbāna* seems to be dying out. “*Nibbāna*,” said a monk in Burma, “is a fearsome thought. I have no hope of attaining it.” “We are walking in darkness,” said a Ceylonese leader, “without seeing a light, a person, or a hope.” Missionaries, both in Burma and Ceylon, are agreed that the teaching of Buddhism has changed very greatly during

¹ Sanskrit, *Maitri*.

the last few decades among those who have come, directly or indirectly, in touch with Christianity. Formerly Buddhists always preached that there was no supreme God, that *Nibbāna* meant total quiescence, almost total annihilation, that man is his own savior, and that there is no possible escape from the penalty of sin. In contrast, today, many admit that there must be a God, declare that Gotama is a savior, and believe that sin is forgiven and that *Nibbāna* is something akin to the Christian conception of heaven.

(d) *Christianity Imparts a Needed Sense of Spiritual Freedom.*—It is clear that Christianity can dispel the persistent superstitious terrors of demon-haunted villages and can lessen the horrors of the slums of the great cities. One who lives in a Christian country can scarcely imagine, much less estimate, the relief which is thus brought to the lives of thousands. A country like Burma is not interested in a new system of ethics. It is satisfied with what it already possesses in the way of moral standards. But it does sorely need and should heartily welcome the sense of spiritual freedom and power which Christianity can impart. "The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." This saying has ever a new meaning to superstition-ridden peoples. And the Burmese behind their gaiety hide a real fear. Even Buddhism has had to make terms with their craving for release from malicious or evil spirits.

4. *The Christianity Which May Prevail*

Buddhism, then, has in the noble eightfold path given to Burma a lofty system of ethics, which has been so long accepted as the ideal that it satisfies the Burmese mind. Yet it is so high that the average man despairs of attaining it. Burma, like other countries, is in dire need of leaders of strong and robust character. Buddhism's greatest

failure, as many loyal Buddhists declare, is in the task of building character. If Burma saw a resolute and radiant Christianity exemplified in its representatives, she would indeed be attracted to it, but at present her people regard Christianity as a Western parallel to Buddhism, which its own followers do not take too seriously, and whose moral code is flagrantly broken by Western residents or visitors to this pleasure-loving land. They see the haunts of vice in their great cities frequented by representatives of the white race, and they know that their country, in the past at any rate, has been looked upon as a place "where there ain't no Ten Commandments." In all fairness to Western Christianity and to international friendship, the West should see to it, by any and every means in its power, that she is represented in Southern Asia by her very best men and women, in mission service, in commerce and in diplomacy. The wide-ranging plans of the Rockefeller Foundation in assisting Oriental peoples in their fight against the inroads of the hookworm and of other diseases, combined with the fine character of its chosen representatives, serves to make it a very real addition to the forces today which represent Christianity at its best. Such allies all missionaries welcome with enthusiasm.

(a) *Moral Conditions in Burma Call for Reform.*—The moral situation in Burma, in the minds of intelligent Buddhists, calls either for the thorough revivification of Buddhism itself or for Christianity in its most vital form. The need is grave. The Burma of today is at once the most literate and the most criminal portion of the Indian Empire. A government report for 1912 reads as follows:

The moral sense of the people is diminishing in step with a slackening of religious observances. With the decay of ancient beliefs the Buddhist religion is losing its moral sanction as an inspiring force in the lives of its adherents. Drunkenness, gambling, drug-taking and vicious habits, increasing as they

all are, tend to produce a weakening of self-control and a loss of self-respect, which in favoring circumstances easily create the criminal.

A fair-minded observer would lay these deplorable conditions to the impact of Western "civilization," which has broken down many of the safeguards natural to Buddhism. The substitution of foreign rule for national control carries with it an emphasis on some social sanctions and a weakening of others. Whatever the advantages, and they are many, of British rule, there is an inevitable sacrifice of some influences which promoted morality and happiness in the older days. The conditions which exist are readily open to reform and are in process of betterment. The acceptance of Christianity will hasten the day.

(b) *Loving Social Service Opens a Way.*—When Christianity finds expression in deeds of loving social service, such as a work for lepers, asylums for the blind and schools for the deaf, or the relief of any other needy class in a community, it touches a responsive chord in every Buddhist heart. Christianity's social appeals go far towards breaking down all forms of prejudice. It is a significant fact that the young Burmese are organizing their own Young Men's Buddhist Association and their own social service clubs, although at present these movements are not showing any great staying power, since they are merely imitative.

5. *Buddhism's Last Stand in Burma*

There is still much work for the Christian missionary in Burma to do. Buddhism in many parts of the land seems to be making one great last stand against the gospel of Christ. Its own standards are in many respects so high that the Christianity which shall win the adherence of the followers of Buddha must be of a thoroughly loving and sacrificial type. Such Christianity, which is always in it-

self an overpowering argument for the efficacy and truth of the Christian faith, is altogether too rare. Outside of the missionary circle it is so infrequent as to be anomalous. In fact, the Buddhist revival of the present time may be regarded as in some respects a reaction from the pseudo-Christianity which the Burmese through sad experiences are tempted to regard as that of the West.

Christianity possesses in the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth the dynamic which Buddhism, particularly the monastic Buddhism of Burma, sorely needs. To interpret this genuine Christianity to them, and to show how reasonably and fully it satisfies the deepest needs of which Buddhists are conscious becomes the appealing task of the Christian missionary. There are few harder fields than the Burma of today, yet none which are more attractive.

III

BUDDHISM IN CEYLON

CEYLON, although it lies just across the Indian Ocean from Burma and rejoices in the same sunny skies, has developed throughout the centuries a Buddhism of a different, more somber type. Ceylon is a beautiful country, having in boundless profusion the treasures that nature can give. Its largest city, Colombo, the one which travelers know best, is, in a large degree, a modern, Occidentally planned city with Oriental inhabitants. The characteristic features of Sinhalese Buddhism are not to be seen there. One must rather go to the old capital, Kandy, up among the hills, the last refuge of the ancient line of kings before the British took full control of the island, over one hundred years ago. Kandy is still, notwithstanding the improvements which British enterprise has introduced, the same quiet old city, crowded with Buddhist symbols and fiercely loyal to the old traditions of the religion of the yellow robe, which for twenty-one hundred years has held undisputed sway over the populace of the southern two-thirds of the beautiful island. In the districts of the extreme north the inhabitants are prevailingly Tamils, who are Saivites in religion and have no relationship of any kind with Buddhism. Except for business reasons the Tamils mingle little with the Sinhalese. Neither group of Ceylonese affects the other noticeably, except in governmental relationships.

1. *How Buddhism Is Propagated*

In Ceylon, as in Burma, one notices the relatively vast numbers of monks, though the proportion of the population is much smaller, and their standing is inferior. In fact, it is rather fashionable in good Buddhist society in Ceylon to despise the mendicants of the yellow robe. Nevertheless, there are about eight thousand of them, in a total population of three millions of Sinhalese, enough to lay a very great burden upon the people. There are some noble characters among them and their total influence is very great. Just as in Burma, yet with far less efficiency, they bring the teachings of the Buddhist law and the practice of its numerous demands to the attention of the people.

Their monasteries and temples cover the land. Some of these in active use, such as the great and ancient Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, are held in very great reverence, not only by the local populace and by good Buddhists all over Ceylon, but by Buddhists of other countries, who come to Kandy on pilgrimages. They visit Adam's Peak, where they prostrate themselves before a gigantic footprint, said to have been made by Gotama, and likewise Anuradhapura and its glorious ruins. A festival day at this temple will reproduce many of the characteristic scenes already pictured as happening in Burma.

(a) *A Festal Day at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy.*—When a great festal day occurs in south Ceylon, thousands flock to Kandy from the country round about to share in the splendid ceremonials. Life is dull in the villages, and such opportunities find a hearty response. Ceylon possesses two relics of the Lord Buddha and his days which are esteemed very precious by faithful Buddhists everywhere. One is the great and very ancient Bo-tree at Anuradhapura, the reputed successor of the original tree under which the Lord Buddha sat, when he received

his enlightenment. The other is possessed by this temple at Kandy. It is a more immediate relic of the Lord Buddha himself, said to be of wonder-working potency and of unbelievable sacredness. It is a tooth, believed implicitly by devotees to have been a veritable tooth of the Master himself. Even to gaze at the nest of complicated caskets within which this holy relic is supposed to rest is thought by Buddhists to be the means of gaining much "merit." It affects Buddhist devotees very much as devout but ignorant Roman Catholics are moved by the sight of "relics of the true Cross." Doubtless there are many loyal sons of the Roman Church who look upon such ideas as superstitious. Probably, also, there are many professed Buddhists in Ceylon in these modern days to whom the ancient habit of seeking for relics of the Master and of his day and of placing such relics in stately dome-shaped *dagobas* has lost most of its significance. Nevertheless, both in America and Europe, and in Southern Asia, there are thousands of unlettered people to whom such relics as these seem to make a real appeal. And though this tooth is probably not a genuine relic, yet some bones, almost certainly those of the Buddha, have been found in India.

At such a festival the people listen reverently to the preaching of the monks, join in the processions, offer their candles and flowers and say their prayers, just as everywhere in Buddhist lands. Each great festival reaches its climax in the very guarded exhibit of some very precious relic of Buddha, or of his time, seldom actually seen, but only presented in its enveloping or protecting coverings. The people go away, however, with a fresh impression of the place of the Lord Buddha in their daily round of living.

(b) *The Hillside Preacher.*—But Buddhism is not merely a religion which accepts things as they are, passively. From its foundation it has been in theory and

in practice a religion which aims at conversion and education. It goes to the people wherever it can find them and seeks to keep alive their devotion to religious obligations. The people listen to the teaching of the monks, who, however inefficient or unworthy in matter of fact, are the evangelists of Buddhism. In the early spring, when the rains are over and the moonlight shines brightly, the Sinhalese farmers gather from the little villages on some convenient hillside, where they listen to the monk, as he patiently declares and expounds the law of Buddha.

Life is dull in these villages, so that any incident and any teaching will be welcome. As in Burma, so in Ceylon, a belief in demonism is inextricably interwoven with popular Buddhism. It is a strange world in which the peasantry live, "a world of bare and brutal facts, of superstition, of grotesque imagination; a world of hunger and fear and devils, where a man is helpless before the unseen, unintelligible forces surrounding him." In Ceylon the demonism is darker and far more sinister and it blends with a far more somber and pessimistic Buddhism. It is not so many years since human sacrifices were made to the demons of disease. In the dim, confused minds of these ignorant villagers devils and anti-devils, exorcists and monks, incantations and prayers to Buddha are commingled with slight differentiation.

This darker pessimism speaks through the monotonous sing-song of the yellow-robed monk on the hillside, as he speaks to the villagers, urging upon them that life is transient and full of sorrow, that none the less their chief duty is to avoid taking the life of the meanest animal. He would not except the malarial mosquito or the plague-bringing rat, against which government edicts have gone out. Even the poor farmer, however, may wonder how his religion should be in conflict with the proper care of

his family or with the power and knowledge of the government. He may ask, "Which is to die, my child or the rat?" There can eventually be but one reply made to such a question.

The men listen dully, chewing their betel-nut. They do not have as much respect for the monks as do the Burmese. They realize more acutely what a drain the monastic order, which owns one third of the arable land of the country, makes upon their resources. Yet they are not disrespectful to the "Law" and its teachers, and probably carry away from the preaching a certain sense of religious peace.

(c) *The Schools for Instruction.*—In Ceylon, as in Burma, the monastic order is eager to secure additions to its numbers out of the fresh swarms of boys that are constantly growing up. The admirable system of primary education, developed during the last century by the government of Ceylon, tends naturally against so sweeping an influence over these boys on the part of the monks, as the Order possesses in Burma. Moreover, although the monks think of themselves as having a first claim upon the resources of the Sinhalese people, they are far less active than their brethren in Burma. Except in a fitful way they are not habitual schoolmasters, like those of Burma, but live a life of indolence. The instruction they give as an Order consequently does not amount to much. Yet there are those who are kind and thoughtful and willing to help to inculcate what all Buddhists desire—a knowledge of the Scriptures. Out of the little groups thus taught there are some sufficiently impressed by one aspect or another of the life of the monkish order to be drawn later on into its membership. Some strong and true boys are brought under the spell, but the great majority of those who become monks seem to be from those who are least important socially.

2. *The Hold of Buddhism upon the Sinhalese*

In Ceylon Buddhism has had a supreme opportunity. For over two thousand years, since the royal missionary, Mahinda, brought it to the island, it has held unbroken sway over the Sinhalese. For the greater number of these centuries it had the patronage and liberal support of kings, whose relatives were often numbered among the great abbots. The remarkable ruins of the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Pollanaruwa, in spite of the incursions of the jungle and of the neglect of centuries, are still magnificent and eloquent monuments, which voice the greatness and the splendor of Buddhism at its height, when Western lands were still barbarian. A religion thus embedded in the national as well as the religious traditions of the race would naturally have a real abiding-place of some sort in the life of any people and be hard to uproot. To estimate the real hold of Buddhism upon the Sinhalese is not a simple matter.

(a) *On the Peasantry*.—In the average village, crude as the preaching of the monks may be, and however dull the response of the people, Buddhism confers a certain sense of religious peace, of other-worldly calm. The Lord Buddha has a place, however imperfectly grasped, as an ideal of moral and religious perfection. The *Dhamma*¹ expresses right living standards to the people. Buddhism has a great hold upon them, because it is a standardizing influence and because it emphasizes the gentler and finer aspect of life. Yet the Sinhalese, like the Burmese, are really the victims of a decadent Buddhism which is too weak to lift them above the influence of grinding poverty and of a pervasive and militant demonism. So long as the peasantry is chiefly interested in the struggle for existence and in the day by day propitiation of the demons round about, they really have little room in their hearts

¹ *Dhamma* (Sanskrit, *dharma*) means "law" or "teaching."

or minds for any higher religious life. A Christianity which reaches them must improve their economic position and eliminate this fear, before they can reach a more spiritual faith in Jesus Christ.

(b) *On the More Intelligent Laity.*—The great tree of Buddhism has planted its roots deeply in the fair soil of Ceylon. One may minimize the significance of such unintelligent devotion as a villager gives and the professional loyalty of an organized priesthood. It is of more importance to discover the real attitude of an intelligent Buddhist layman, one well educated within the last quarter century, who dresses in Western style, and is reasonably well acquainted with Western ideas and methods.

If such a man is in attendance at a temple festival, or if he is a listener to the preaching of an itinerant monk, he will doubtless show in his manner a shade of contempt. Nevertheless, Buddhism will have its appeal for him. This may be in part due to the spirit of nationalism which has been kept alive during and because of wave after wave of European aggression. In the beginning of the sixteenth century the Portuguese got a foothold in the island; a hundred and fifty years later they were driven out by the Dutch, who, in turn, gave place, about 1800, to the English. Since the English occupancy Buddhism has been perfectly free to develop in its own way. But many of its leaders still cherish the memory, often with much exaggeration, of the glory of the ancient kingdom. When they dream of national rehabilitation, they identify with it a loyalty to inherited Buddhism. The more sober-minded among the educated Sinhalese may realize the solid advantages of the existing political situation under English control, and yet Buddhism, even in comparison with the type of Christianity with which they are likely to be acquainted, makes a real appeal to them as a factor in the great days of national freedom.

3. *Buddhism as a Cultured Sinhalese Sees It*

The real appeal of Buddhism to a patriotic, educated Sinhalese may be on account of its spiritual heritage, if he really understands that legacy, but rests chiefly on his conviction that Buddhism has still a place in the world and a real function. He sometimes expresses this thought in geographical or racial terms. He thinks of Buddhism as particularly adapted to his people and to other Asiatic peoples. He also points to the following particular values of Buddhism.

(a) *The Appeal of Its Impressive Past.*—Such men are impressed by what they see around them of a very ancient and very real civilization, which Buddhism undoubtedly built. In the jungles everywhere are indications of the days when Buddhism taught the people to irrigate their fields, to develop and spend much wealth, to build strong cities, to write remarkable books and to develop a high culture. In the ruined cities of the north the patriot sees the melancholy remains of a great Buddhist civilization, great not merely in material achievements, as shown by the huge tanks, the irrigation systems, the temples and the cities, now almost hidden by rank undergrowth, but remaining to prove that Ceylon was once the seat of a powerful Buddhist kingdom. He has reason, too, for patriotic pride when he recalls the spirit of some of the great rulers of the past. Suppose, for instance, that he should contrast the devastation caused by the Great War in Europe with what comes to his mind, as he stands before the statue of the noble *Dutthagāmini*, who, to save his people from war, sought out the usurper, slew him in single combat, and then in the greatness of his heart put up a splendid monument in his honor. Such recollections as these convince the young Sinhalese of today that Buddhism has still a place in the world.

(b) *The Appeal of Its Social Efficiency.*—The intelli-

gent Buddhist layman in Ceylon not merely emphasizes the sense of peace and quiet satisfaction which comes to a loyal Buddhist; he also claims that Buddhism has done away with caste and has purified religion. He often compares the dignity, the stately beauty and the harmlessness of the Buddhist temple and its surroundings with the incredibly gross indecencies of a Saivite shrine in Southern India. In Buddhism the object of worship is a great and good super-man; in Saivite Hinduism the base passions of a perverted sexuality are intermingled with worship. The superiority of Buddhism is clearly manifest.

(c) *Its Advocacy of High Social Standards.*—The apologist argues, too, that Buddhism still retains the power of molding public opinion. He may properly instance the strenuous appeals which the Buddhists have made to the Ceylon government to suppress rather than to encourage the liquor traffic. He may fairly point also to some of the good Buddhist schools, where young Ceylon is taught the great moral lessons of that faith. It is true that theosophists from the West were chiefly responsible for starting these better schools, yet the Buddhists keep them up, adding new buildings and improving the quality of instruction.

4. *The Marked Contrasts among Buddhists Today*

Buddhists in Ceylon, as we have already seen, are not all of one kind. They represent various stages of religious development and various tendencies. There is a marked difference between the audience of the hillside preacher and a group of cultured Buddhists.

Let us return to the hillside preacher. A marked change has come over his stolid audience. All seem now alert and eager. Seated around his platform, they are holding a cord which seems to bind them in some mystic circle. The monk turns their attention to "pirit," a kind of magic

incantation. He begins to recite the ancient runes by which evil is averted and demon armies kept at bay. He is telling how the bandit, Augulimāla, who had killed nine hundred and ninety-nine victims and wore their fingers as a chaplet, tried to kill the Buddha so as to make the full tale of a thousand, but was converted by him on the spot. "May the merit of this action be yours," he says, and they all cry *Sadhu*, "Amen!" They can then go home with some sort of satisfaction.

"All humbug," grunts the layman. He proposes that his companions go to the Young Men's Buddhist Association, where a Sinhalese advocate, newly returned from England, is going to read a paper on "Buddhism, a Gospel for Europe." Leaving the palms and fragrant trees of the jungle silhouetted against the brilliant sky, and passing the white buildings of the Buddhist high school and of the venerated Temple of the Tooth, the group talks of this possibility. One says that a movement is on foot to send a mission to Europe. He may declare that if Christians were real followers of Jesus of Nazareth, such missions would be wholly in vain; and that the spirit of Gotama is akin to that of Jesus. Such a man often says to a Westerner, "We see your Christ in His beauty, because we have first seen the beauty of our Buddha." Such men are not far away from Christianity.

5. *Christianity's Approach to the Sinhalese Buddhists*

In Ceylon, even more than in Burma the attitude of the people of the land to Christianity is strongly prejudiced by the actions of travellers, business men and others who hail from the West. Christianity to them is a Western religion. Just as we make the mistake of judging Far-eastern peoples by those who make their way to America to earn a competence, so the Sinhalese judge Christianity by those from Europe or America whom they

see. Among these missionaries and religiously-minded laymen are relatively few. Thousands of visitors of every kind and character pass through Ceylon each year, who create not infrequently an unfavorable impression. The net result is to make the presentation of Christianity to the populace proportionately harder.

Another difficulty has grown out of the desire of certain Europeans to become propagators of Buddhism in the West. These have settled down in Buddhist centers, notably in Ceylon, have cultivated the friendship of the Buddhist authorities, and have imparted, in some cases, to the Buddhist leaders a certain enthusiasm for converting Europe and America to Buddhism. These men and women are often very keen and able thinkers. They have become fascinated by the Buddhism of the "books," and are able to shut their eyes to Buddhism as it is actually lived today. Few missionaries in the past have been able to take the time to acquire the philosophical, psychological and religious training which would enable them to get abreast of the religious culture and the history of Buddhism and to think on even terms with these scholarly pro-Buddhists. The latter, though few in number, are naturally influential with the Sinhalese people. They urge, moreover, that Buddhism is not decadent but still a living growth.

Whatever such men, or the national leaders who take a cue from them, may say or think, Ceylon needs Christianity. Much as Buddhism may have done for this lovely land, it does need today the saving power of Jesus Christ, alike in the jungle village and in the teeming city, to cast out fear and to break the power of sin over men, enabling them to live nearer to their ideals. In Ceylon, as in Burma, Buddhism is in some degree adapting itself to the new world-environment. Its old cry of pain, "All is fleeting, transient, sorrow-

ful!" is giving place to attempts at social service and positive living. Yet as compared with Burma or with Christian lands, the predominating note among Buddhists in Ceylon is one of world-weariness and despair. Christianity lays hold of all ranks of people. Its message uplifts and ennobles. It develops the gifts of its followers, discovering new abilities. It places all people, Western and Oriental alike, on the plane of brotherhood and of partnership in the work of world betterment. It does away with no quality which adorns human nature and encourages every action which leads to real human happiness. Christianity can accept and honor all the finer side of Buddhism, lifting its devotees at the same time out of their apathy or despair.

Christianity's prospects in Ceylon are quite full of hope. One in every ten of the islanders today is reported to be a Christian. If this is true, the outlook is bright, whenever this one-tenth of the people really manifest their faith, and whenever Western Christianity is equally loyal to its own standards and wisely aggressive in its friendly approach.

Even as matters stand, the way ought to be open for true idealists, whether Christian, Buddhist, Mohammedan or Hindu, to coöperate much more freely and with more mutual sympathy in great social programs. There should be a religious league of peoples, a great brotherhood, promoting education and social hygiene, fighting disease and uplifting the ignorant and degraded. Such friendly coöperation will help to bring all true seekers after God into harmony. Moreover, it would mean an ultimate Christianity, since Christianity is the only religion broad enough and simple enough to be entirely inclusive of the spiritual truths of other religions. It would, however, mean something other than a Western Christianity, for to it the Eastern peoples would contribute much

out of their stores of insight into the very heart of real religion.

The Sinhalese afford an inspiring objective for the Christian missionary. Their devotion to the Buddha as well as their moral and social helplessness make them worth the winning. They have gifts to lay at the feet of Christ. They may soon be doing their share in the establishment of His Kingdom of love and truth throughout the great world of inner Asia: for they have a Christian community large and wealthy enough to be self-propagating.

IV

BUDDHISM IN SIAM

CEYLON and Burma were for many centuries Buddhist kingdoms. The Sinhalese sovereign at Kandy could trace back his ancestry in a direct line for almost two thousand years. These kings were the patrons of the hierarchy with its innumerable monks and rejoiced to contribute to their support. Not infrequently, members of the royal family were abbots of the huge monasteries. Indeed, the rapid development of Buddhism was in part the result of the steady and generous patronage of sovereigns, who took the great Asoka of India as their pattern.

Since 1815 in Ceylon, and since 1886 in Burma, royalty has ceased to function, so that Buddhism has been obliged to get along by its own efforts. In neither kingdom has the British government ever attempted to belittle the Buddhist religious authorities or to minimize their claims to respect. It remains entirely neutral in religious matters, guaranteeing to every subject the absolute right to worship in his own way, unless that way involves the taking of human life or some gross interference with social freedom.

Something of the same attitude is found on the part of the French in French Indo-China, which is another Buddhist land. The Buddhism which prevails there, to be sure, is of a rather vague, tolerant type. It shows traces of Chinese influence in the prevalence of ancestor-worship. It is really in the main a demon-worship. Its customs are so far from typical that they will be over-

looked in this volume. Moreover, Indo-China is not to any great extent an objective of American or British Protestant missionary activity. The French people do not welcome our missionaries to their colonial possessions. Roman Catholic missionaries have predominated in the past and are likely to do so in days to come, since the Protestant Church of France is small.

1. *Siam a Buddhist Kingdom*

In contrast with all these countries is Siam. It is today a Buddhist kingdom. Its sovereign, an absolute monarch, is a staunch patron and defender of the faith. His own brother stands at the head of the monastic order in Siam. Thus, conditions there now are not unlike those which prevailed in Ceylon centuries ago. Since the king is well educated, a graduate of Oxford, the Siam of today is far in advance of the conditions which prevailed in early times. Christian missions are not forbidden. Out of the population of six and a half millions, there are some fifty thousand Christians, half of them Roman Catholics. The sovereign and his people desire to modernize Buddhism and to make it the basis for a progressive and uplifting civilization. Siam opens wide her door to every influence which helps to build up the national life. The ruler values the friendship of Western peoples and gratefully acknowledges the medical, philanthropic and educational work carried on by the missionaries. Nevertheless, he is a staunch Buddhist. Thus Siam is an interesting example of a free Buddhist people doing their best to develop their religion into a faith which comports with modern ideas and makes use of modern methods.

2. *Public Worship in Siam*

In Siam, as in Burma and Ceylon, the monks are numerous and very influential. The habit, already alluded to

in the description of religious life in Burma, of giving every youth a probational novitiate in the monastic order for at least a few months is quite generally observed. Even those who have been abroad for an education don the yellow robe for a period on their return to Siam. This custom serves to offset the skepticism which is the more or less certain effect of contact with modern progress. Such dissenters find enough to approve in the ethics of Buddhism to keep them from active revolt.

There is little public worship in Siam in the Christian sense of the word. There is a regular day set aside for worship, but few attend the temples on that day and most of those who do go are women and children. The popular expression of devotion comes through religious or semi-religious ceremonials. Great functions of one sort or another are continually held to the great delight and pride of the people, who never fail to turn out in force to view the processions of dignitaries. One of the most noteworthy and characteristic of these ceremonial occasions is the annual visitation of the sovereign to the temples of the capital, Bangkok, which are under his patronage.

3. *The Thot Krathin Festival*

At some time between the eleventh and twelfth moons (November) this great event occupies all Siam. For weeks, every household, from the retinue of the sovereign himself to the home of the humblest peasant farmer, has been busy "laying down holy cloth," or making patchwork robes for the monks, that the letter of the old commandment, "Be ye clothed in rags," may be observed, and the monks be supplied with their year's clothing. At the same time offerings of bedding, furniture and food are made, great merit being acquired by the faithful. The king in his splendid barge of state, with its prow shaped

like a dragon, its sixty oarsmen, and its canopy of cloth of gold, sets out for one of the great *wats* or temples. He is seated on his throne and wears a golden crown; round about him are numerous little princes. Arrived at the shrine his retainers carry the bales of cloth and the other offerings into the temple, and then the king himself, with due ceremony and amid barbaric music and military salutes, disembarks from the barge and lights five candles which are standing upon the table in the temple prepared for his offering. Then, burning incense, he bows to the image of the Buddha, to the sacred books written on strips of palm-leaf and to the assembled monks; he is "taking refuge" in the Buddhist Jewels. He then reverently asks the abbot to accept him as a lay-adherent and to allow him to keep the "Five Precepts," not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual sin, not to lie, nor to drink strong drink. And if it be a holy day he will also take the vows of a monk, not to eat after midday, not to watch theatrical shows, nor use perfumes, nor sleep on a high, luxurious bed. Then he offers his gifts which the monks accept with the word, *Sadhu*, "Amen" or "Well done!" A distribution is made according to their rank, and then with a chorus of blessings from the grateful monks the king, after bowing again to the Three Jewels, makes his stately departure, going to another shrine, where the same ceremonies are repeated. The widespread public interest in this festival, and its importance as a stated annual event give it some such rank among the Siamese as Christmas has for Western peoples, a time of good cheer and cheerful giving with a religious sanction.

4. *The Wats or Temples*

In Siam, as everywhere in Buddhism, there are countless pagodas. As in Burma these are made attractive with much golden ornamentation and with colored

tiles. They are of four grades. The finest are those built by the king, the next best are those built by the princes, then come those built by the nobles, and, finally, those built by the common people, usually by a subscription organized by the monks or by some enthusiastic layman. The erection of such sacred structures is thought to be a sure means of gaining much "merit," which will counterbalance a good number of evil deeds. The gaining of such "merit" has been said to be the very sum and substance of Siamese Buddhism. There is some truth in this saying and it applies to all Southern Asia. A Buddhist is always on the look-out to accumulate merit and reckons up every atom of deserving activity. Yet this tendency—natural in a religion which glorifies merit and assigns future rewards on its basis—does not do away with a genuine devotion to the other aspects of Buddhism. The heart of an Asiatic saint is as free from calculation as that of any devotee. But real saints are rare in all parts of the world.

Around these temples the religious life of the people centers, yet less definitely and continuously than in Ceylon or Burma. The trend of Buddhism, as encouraged in Siam, is to emphasize its ethical value and its impulses in the direction of social uplift. The majority of the people follow their king in believing that Buddhism can be made the basis for a truly modern state, worthy to rank with Christian countries of the West.

5. *The King and Pāli Learning*

The present king, whom we may call, for short, King Maha Mongkut or Rama VI—he has more names than a Hohenzollern—the sixth sovereign of the dynasty, is a graduate of Oxford, a man of the world, and a great patron of Buddhist scholarship. This has been a tradition of his house for centuries. In no small degree is the present in-

terest in Pāli learning in Western countries due to the enthusiasm of the ruling house of Siam, which has presented splendid libraries of the sacred books to many universities and temples. Every three years the king summons the monkish candidates for degrees in Pāli learning to undergo examinations. For nine days in the comparatively cool weather of the early part of the year he makes a royal festival in their honor, during which time the candidates are undergoing tests which increase every day in stiffness. Those who survive to the end are given the degree *Parëean ek* or "first class honors," with which goes a small pension; those who drop out before the end may be given second, third or fourth class degrees. So the knowledge of the sacred books is kept alive. Some of these native scholars, here as in Ceylon and Burma, reach a remarkable degree of proficiency.

6. *Buddhist Education*

Education is highly valued in Siam, just as in Burma. The many monasteries which brighten the landscape are the elementary schoolhouses and the monks are the teachers. The system which encourages every lad to spend some time at a monastery as a novice provides a natural educational period. In these monastery schools the boys are taught, not merely the rudiments of their religion, but also reading, writing and arithmetic. The competition of the well-organized schools which are managed by the missions led to the establishment in 1903 by the government of provincial training colleges for the instruction in teaching methods of the priests and of laymen who are teachers. Through these better qualified teachers the monastic schools are gradually being brought into line with the educational organization of the government, which aims to be efficient in accord with modern standards. For the education of girls far less is done in Siam, yet even

their opportunities are improving under the quiet pressure of the good results gained in mission schools.

7. *Christianity's Outlook in Siam*

The very progressiveness of Siam makes it more difficult for Christian missions to make progress. King and people are not unfriendly, but their welcome is for the social service of Christianity rather than for new ethical or spiritual ideas. It may be counted as a very important fact, however, that the philanthropic and intellectual ideals of Christianity are received with genuine favor. These are not the least significant results of mission work.

V

THREE TYPICAL FUNERAL SCENES

BUDDHISM, like Christianity, makes much of the next world. It plays almost its chief part on funeral occasions. Its rapid acceptance by Asiatic peoples who were wholly given over to demon worship was in large measure due to its spirituality, to its emphasis on a future life, and to its denial of final significance in the everyday life one lives. The true character of the Buddhism of a country is, therefore, illustrated in its dealings with those who die.

1. *The Funeral Rites of a Burmese Monk*

When a senior Burmese monk (a *Hponggi*) dies the whole countryside attends the imposing funeral. In clothing of exquisite silk, resembling a brilliant swarm of butterflies, the people surround the great catafalque, blazing with tinsel and gold leaf, on which lies the embalmed body of the monk. In course of time the coffin is taken down, and a programme of merry-making begins. The young bloods of the village to which the monk has belonged range themselves in two carefully picked teams on either side of the coffin. Then begins a tug of war to see which shall possess the coffin, the victorious team treating the defeated to drinks, and to side shows at the little booths which cluster round, awaiting custom. These and other contests make a joyful, even boisterous scene over which all the people rejoice, for has not the good man been released from this transient life, which, neverthe-

less, is good and satisfying while blood is hot and youth endures? Has he not returned to a life of glory, they remark, and won much merit for his own folk and for all the faithful?

In due time the body is restored to its resting-place on the funeral-pyre, the fire is lighted, and the whole mass flares up in flame and smoke, consuming not only the body, but along with it the decorations, including paintings of numerous demons, among whom may be a European with a gun! Only demons, they argue, can kill for sport!¹ When the body has been consumed, the crowd disperses with shouts of merriment, well content, not least so the relatives of the departed. The dead has been honored, the family name has been distinguished, a good show has been staged, and everybody is satisfied. If, for the next year or more, the family exchequer remains sorely depleted, still "it is the custom," and every one expects it to be followed. Some one has well said that Buddhism in Burma is a cheery and social affair, "from festive marriages to no less festive funerals." One can confess to an admiration for this cheerful view of death, even if some of the expressions of it are bizarre!

2. *The Cremation of a Sinhalese Abbot*

A great Sinhalese abbot has passed away. It is a national event. The hillside near Kandy is thronged with great companies of monks in every shade of yellow and brown, while around them surges a somber sea of the faithful laity. In the center of the huge assemblage is the funeral-pyre, draped in white and red. Standing beside it, a monk tells in sonorous, mournful tones of the greatness and goodness of the departed, who, though he had not become worthy of *Nibbāna*, had his feet surely set upon the upward path leading to a good rebirth in *So-wan*, a

¹ Yet many of their own people are mighty hunters.

heaven. Then amid solemn chanting and the wailing of flutes and throbbing of drums, torches are applied to the pyre. While the people bow their heads and cry *Sadhu*, "Amen," the body is reduced to ashes. Then, solemnly and silently, the great throng disperses, the people to take up the ordinary duties of life, the monks to meditate upon its transient character and unreality. And here a young novice, to whom the dead man has been very dear, stays weeping, until the last embers die down and night comes swiftly on.

3. *The Funeral of a Siamese Prince*

When a nephew of the king has died, his funeral sermon may be preached by another royal prince, who is also a monk. His sermon is true to type and to the orthodox Buddhism of his race. It is drawn from the *Dhammapada*, accepted in all lands as the veritable words of the Buddha himself. "As kinsmen welcome kinsmen returning after long sojourn in far countries, so do good deeds welcome the good as they enter the other world. And what are good deeds but the unselfish effort to advance the good of others. All must be left behind as we enter the gate of Death; but as a shadow follows the body so do purity and simplicity of heart and deed steal after us, and minister to us in that world beyond. As a flame is our mortal life, and if there be no fuel it burns no more. We know not when it may die down, for all that has a beginning has also an end, and transient are all things. And as we may take with us only virtue, shall we not cherish and follow after it?"

We are reminded of the picture by G. F. Watts, "Sic Transit Gloria Mundi," in which another prince is seen upon the bier, his crown, his books and his winecup laid aside. Over his bier are the words: "What I spent I had, what I had I lost, what I gave I have." This is sound

Buddhism. Many in the long line of kings and princes of many lands, who have been proud to wear the yellow robe, would reëcho such ideas.

4. *The Real Heart of Buddhism*

Which of these funeral scenes (chosen because Buddhism plays almost its chief part at such times) is most true to type? It is a perplexing question. Buddhism has from the very beginning been chiefly a religion for monks, calling men and women to leave the world. It was never exactly optimistic, and yet another permanent root of its remarkable power over mankind has been that often men and women who obeyed its call gained a sense of discovery, an attitude of hopefulness, an atmosphere of sheer joy. Especially was this true in the golden age of Buddhism, the first five centuries of its existence. There was something vernal in the air. "In joy we live, hating none; let us live in the midst of those who hate, unhat- ing; in the midst of those who ail, let us live in perfect health; having nothing, yet we shall possess great riches." This was the expression of the spirit of the early *sangha*.¹ When we study the Buddhism of today, we find that it retains these two dominant characteristics: this blending of sadness and quiet joy. Even in sunny Burma the old people and the monks seem sad at times; and even in Ceylon and Siam the ordinary folk are fairly cheerful, as they go on pilgrimage or make their offerings.

¹ Monastic communit

VI

BUDDHISM AS A LIVING RELIGION

BUDDHISM stands in a different relation to Christianity than any other world religion, because it has unquestionably done for Eastern peoples something of the intellectual, moral and spiritual service which Christianity has done for Europe and America. Moreover, it is showing a strange power of revival. All over Asia Buddhism seems to be gaining renewed vigor. It also seems to have a real appeal to certain types of mind in the West. There are little groups of Westerners in Burma and in Ceylon, the former Scotch, the latter German, who have for some years been promoting the propagation of Buddhism in Western lands. They feel convinced that Buddhism is "the religion of mature minds." One of their number, a Scot, known as *Bhikkhu*¹ Silācāra, wrote in 1913: "This seems to be the place of honor which Burma is called upon to fill in the family of the nations of the world,—that of being *dhammadāyaka* to the world, giver of the *dhamma* [teaching] of the Blessed One to all the nations of the earth. What prouder, what more glorious, what more merit-bringing position could any people ask for than to be chosen as the bearer of the sublime teaching of the Blessed One!" There is a considerable amount of Buddhist propaganda today in Europe and America, even though few Buddhists from the Orient are found with the courage to preach Buddhism in person in Western cities. The propagandists are themselves Westerners

¹ Sanskrit, *Bhikshu*. It means "mendicant."

in the main. In Germany, where there are said to be large numbers of Buddhists, a publishing house has been set up at Breslau; while in London the "Buddhist Review" is published regularly. In North America there are numerous Buddhist missions, most of them on the Pacific Coast. Buddhism is the principal non-Christian religion which makes such an appeal as this. What gives it this hold, not only upon great sections of the East, but also upon those who have been born within the range of Christianity, is a question which needs a thoughtful answer. It is a question of vital importance to every one who has at heart the Christianization of the world. It may be faced by the consideration of a series of statements regarding Buddhism's strong features.

1. *Some of the Ways in Which Buddhism Resembles Christianity*

It is only fair in describing the hold of a great religion upon a people to make clear its religious service, as that presents itself to those who are real devotees. The following reasons may be given on behalf of Buddhism's grip on such minds.

(a) *Buddhism Has an Appeal to the Mind.*—No one need hesitate to approve many of the ethical teachings of Buddhism, and to recognize its great influence upon Asiatic peoples. It is not difficult to draw analogies between the acts and sayings of Jesus and those of Gotama. Buddhism, moreover, has a certain appeal to the philosophical and scientific mind which is not found in any other non-Christian religion. There are even those today who seem to think that it is more satisfying to the pure intellect than Christianity. The appeal of Buddhism, therefore, is more than a mild satisfaction of curiosity in something novel. It gives to a mind which denies or is unready for the fundamentals of Christianity an ap-

parently good religious substitute, very ancient and very persistent. All this being true, it follows without question that those who plan to go as Christian missionaries to Buddhist countries must take the utmost pains to prepare themselves to meet intelligent adherents of Buddhism, not merely with friendliness and a sense of sympathy, but with resources of philosophical, psychological and religious knowledge which will enable them to declare the best that is in Christianity and to deal sympathetically and fairly also with Buddhism at its best. Missionaries are all too few who can discuss theology and philosophy on even terms with these Scotch and German Buddhists, who carry much influence with the peoples among whom they live. Some of them are sincere and able men. There are also strong native defenders of the Buddhist faith. Such honest defenders cannot be ignored; rarely can they be argued into silence. Their Buddhism is apt to be of a refined type, getting its inspiration from the contemplation of the gentle, ascetic life of the Buddha, from his ethical sayings and from their social aspects. Only by the demonstration of Christianity's type of life and its essentially religious basis can such men be met satisfactorily. Moreover, without a deep appreciation of the real power of Buddhism no one can understand the history and culture of Asiatic peoples to which Buddhism has given a unity.

(b) *It Recognizes the Fact of Human Suffering.*—Probably no one can fully grasp the essential teachings of Buddhism without studying Hinduism and its philosophy as a background and starting point. But the student of Buddhism can go far by starting from the fact of universal human suffering and the desire for its relief. "One thing only do I teach," said Buddha, "sorrow and the uprooting of sorrow." He was never weary of bringing home to his disciples the horror of the world's pain, in order that

he might lead them on to what he believed to be the only way of salvation.

“What think ye O monks, which is vaster, the flood of tears that, weeping and lamenting, ye in your past lives have shed, or the waters of the four great oceans? Long time, O monks, have ye suffered the death of father, mother, brothers and sisters. Long time have ye undergone the loss of your goods; long time have ye been afflicted with sickness, old age and death.” “Where is the joy, where is the laughter, when all is in flames about us?”

Buddhism is often labelled pessimistic, because its writings are full of attempts, such as these, to make men realize the suffering and the worthlessness of the life to which they cling. Such critics, however, do not realize the hopes which it also holds out to a suffering world, which are just as characteristic of Buddhistic teaching as the pessimism. The Buddhist declares that the disease is diagnosed frankly, in order that it may be cured. “If medical science is pessimistic then Buddhism also is pessimistic.” Buddhism, like other religions, is a “way out.” Naturally, its constant emphasis upon human ills and their cures constitutes an appeal which is permanent.

(c) *It Promises a Way of Escape from Sorrow.*—In India Gotama had an easier task than he would have faced in the full-blooded and less thoughtful West. We Westerners do not need to be convinced of the pain of life, we are now widely awake to it; but to the Hindu of the sixth century before Christ a conviction of the emptiness of life was something in the nature of an obsession. The bright, naïve optimism of earlier ages, revealed in the *Rig-Veda*,¹ had passed away; a combination of circumstances, climate, speculative activities, disappointments and other causes had combined to make India pessimistic.

¹The *Rig-Veda* is a great anthology of primitive religion. The *Vedas* are the early religious books of the Hindus in which a joyous nature-worship predominates.

Chief among these causes was undoubtedly the belief in transmigration, which had come more and more to occupy a central position in Hindu thinking. This belief represents man as doomed to wander from birth to birth and to expiate every evil deed of his past. It is scarcely possible for us in the West to realize how firm a hold this thought has upon the Oriental mind, or how great is its longing for a way of escape. Gotama's resolute attempt to find such a way of escape, his assurance that he had discovered it, and his enthusiastic preaching of the "Way" brought Buddhism into the world as a new religion, and made it a veritable "gospel" to weary and jaded hearts. That good news is still an appreciable message in the East.

(d) *Its Founder Diagnosed and Sought to Cure World Evil.*—Gotama described himself as "a physician of sick souls." He became a Buddha by reason of his discovery of a way of escape from human suffering. Born the son of a small chief in Nepal in the foothills of the Himalayas, about 560 B.C., the young prince, Gotama, was sheltered from the sights and sounds of suffering, as we are told in the stories of Buddhist lore, until the gods, who had a higher destiny in store for him than that of an Indian princeling, were ready to reveal to him the facts of old age and decay and death. In a series of visions,—of an old man tottering down to the grave, of lepers riddled with foul disease, of a corpse laid out for the burning—the great fact of human suffering came home to him. It made so deep an impression that he renounced his royal rights and went out as a mendicant ascetic to discover some way of escape. He honestly tried the various accepted paths laid down by Hindu sages for the attainment of holiness and for escape from the burdens of life, but not until he had rejected these and determined to find some way out for himself did

he discover what he was seeking. At the age of thirty-five, sitting under the Indian *Bo* or fig tree day after day, he meditated patiently and long, until the truth which he was seeking dawned upon him, or, as we should say, until his subconsciousness, which had long been working upon the problem presented to it, sent a complete and satisfying solution into the focus of his conscious mind. Recognizing the fact that Hindu practices had vainly attempted to drug the aching nerve of pain or to tear it out, he offered a more positive remedy, one which was a real advance in the religious thinking of that day. May we not assume that the Spirit of God had much to do with this discovery? Some Christian leaders, perhaps most of them, may feel that this is a dangerous admission, yet Buddha's discovery may have been a stage, taken twenty-five hundred years ago of the "upward road" which, we are bound to believe, humanity is travelling toward a full comprehension of God.

In order to understand the solution which Gotama offered to the world, which undoubtedly satisfied the longing of unnumbered millions of weary pilgrims in India and other lands, we should recall the fact that Gotama described himself as a physician. Just as a physician must first diagnose the disease and recognize the germ which is its secret cause, before he can give the right treatment, so Gotama set himself to discover the hidden cause of the world's suffering. He thought that he had found it in that universal clinging to life which he called *tanhā*, which means a craving for any state less austere than *Nibbāna*. "From *tanhā* springs sorrow; he that is free from *tanhā* is free from sorrow and suffering." According to Gotama, *tanhā* is the source of all the world's agony; and if we face the facts we shall see that the "egoism" of men and nations, which is a form of *tanhā*, is indeed at the root of it.

Could all selfishness and craving cease, much that creates and develops evil would be done away.

(e) *It Cultivates a Sense of the Worthlessness of Temporal Things.*—It is because man clings to things which cannot fully satisfy him, such as the love of family, the desire for wealth and fame, the wish to be reborn in a heaven—all of which are classed together in Buddhism—that he has to go on being reborn. This is the Buddhist doctrine of *kamma*. Hinduism, like Christianity, thinks of a soul which dwells in the body. The Hindu thinks of it as passing from one body to another in the process of transmigration. The tenet of Buddhism is rather that the “ego” of man is a stream of mental energy, the direction of which is under his own control. If he dies full of *tanhā*, cleaving to the things of this world, he will surely be reborn to some sort of misery. If, on the other hand, he dies detached from human interests and open-eyed to the worthlessness of temporal things, he will eventually be set free from the entanglement of life, as we know it on earth, and will pass into *Nibbāna*. Of this goal one can only say with assurance that it is unlike anything known to mortal man. As the man who has not been in love cannot understand the strange behavior of the lover, so only he can understand *Nibbāna* who has experienced it!

Nibbāna means to the Hindu reabsorption into *Brahmā*. To Buddhists it is variously expounded by their teachers as either personal annihilation, or a future state of bliss, or the extinction of all evil desire, which means to them, of all clinging to life. Western writers call it usually by some such phrase as the “great peace,” which is vague enough to mean any of the three. One may fairly say that the Buddhists of Southern Asia are divided in mind regarding the content of the final goal towards which they slowly move. But they have such a goal and because of

if they undervalue the passing life of the day, however important it may seem.

(f) *Its Conception of Bliss Is Realizable in This Life.*—Gotama, however, was not concerned with the next life so much as with this. He laid emphasis also upon the wonderful joy and peace which the fixed purpose to achieve *Nibbāna* had caused him to experience. This was the real relief from suffering, which he had in mind. “Whosoever is pure from all *tanhā*, he is in *Nibbāna*.” This he preached with great conviction and enthusiasm, declaring that men might aim in this life to attain the position of an *arhat* (saint) and actually enter into the preliminary experience of *Nibbāna*. It is this aspect of Buddhism that makes it truly a religion. Its joy and power can be experienced in the midst of the world’s pain. So Buddhism is called by its devotees an “island,” a “refuge,” a “cool retreat,” and by many such alluring terms it makes its continuing and real appeal to the world-weary.

(g) *It Is a Religion Which Calls for the Use of Judgment.*—Buddhism exhibits salvation as, first of all, a way of understanding. It is a religion of analysis, which bids a man to see life steadily, and to see it as a whole, by first taking it to pieces! When one looks at the body, what is it, says Buddhism, after all, that we should regard ourselves as attached to it? There are so many bones, so many tendons, so much skin, so many juices. If a man views the body with an anatomical eye, he will see it as it really is. Disgust will arise in him, which will lead him out into detachment. A Buddhist is sometimes urged to form the habit of sitting in cemeteries, or of having a skeleton near at hand, in order that he may meditate upon the transient nature of all that is mortal. Similarly, he is urged to dispel anger or lust by asking, “Who is it I am angry with, after whom do I lust, but a bag of

bones?" It seeks to dispel passion by the exercise of judgment.

(h) *It Has Noble Ethical Teachings.*—Buddhism places ethical action at the very forefront of its requirements in the "Four Truths" and the "Middle Way."

(1) *The "Four Noble Truths."*—The aged Master, when he was passing away, emphasized afresh the part which intelligent belief should play in the Buddhist scheme of religion. "It is through not understanding and not grasping four things, O monks, that we have to abide and wander through this maze of being," he remarked. The four things which he had in mind were the fact of suffering, its real cause, *tanhā*, the cure of suffering, and the path which leads to *Nibbāna*. They are the "Four Noble Truths" of Buddhism, driven home to every disciple as the very foundation of his religious life.

(2) *The "Eightfold Path."*—With reference to the "way" which leads to *Nibbāna*, Buddhism has made its most remarkable contribution to human thought. It has been called the "Middle Way," between the extreme of an austere asceticism and a spirit of worldliness. It is a clear-cut and admirably arranged ethical scheme, which has undoubtedly done much to elevate the nations among whom it has been practiced. The "eight practices," urged upon every one who aspires to spiritual growth, are right thinking (about the "four noble truths," etc.), right aspirations (benevolence, pity, brotherhood, etc.), right speech, right action, right livelihood (by industries which are not harmful), right effort of mind, right attention (alertness), and right contemplation, or mystic meditation. Such a scheme may readily be ritualized and deadened; but it lends itself no less readily to the cultivation of simple virtues. A popular summary, universally known, teaches "Do good, shun ill, and cleanse the inmost thoughts; this is the teaching of Buddha."

The route of the "Eightfold Path" is usually indicated under three main heads: enlightenment, morality and concentrated meditation. Stage by stage, the disciple is led along this path. "Step by step, day by day, one may purify one's heart from defilements by understanding, even as the smith purifies silver in the fire." The true disciple is urged to avoid the extremes of asceticism on the one hand or of entanglement with the world on the other. So the noble path claims to be a "middle path" of sweet reasonableness. In practice the lines are not always clearly drawn between ritual negligences and moral failures, and the ideal life often seems to be represented as primarily monastic; yet there is no doubt that one who deliberately sets himself to follow the "Eightfold Path" would be a lovable and strong type of character, something like the fine old monk from Tibet in Kipling's *Kim*. And there have been many such, who were really not far from the Kingdom of God.

(i) *It Has Come to Practice Prayer.*—In spite of the protests of Gotama against attempts to persuade the gods, most Buddhists, even in Southern Asia, have come to believe in the practice of prayer. In Tibet, China and Japan prayer is often multiplied by mechanical devices, such as prayer-wheels, prayer-cylinders and prayer-flags,—a degeneration of mysticism into superstitious procedure which is not wholly unknown in other great religions! The human heart is hungry and wants to pray! So even this religion based on enlightenment and on the fixed causality of the universe has had to find a place for prayer. Divine beings have been called in to answer the aspiration of the heart. In Burma, Siam and Ceylon Gotama himself has become deified so that folk pray to him; in China and Japan they have learned to love such compassionate beings as Kwanyin, the Chinese goddess of mercy, or Amitābha, the Buddha of contemplation, thought of as a sort of

emanation of the Lord Buddha, who saves men in his boundless grace. That heaven is merciful is the real hope of every man. A believer impersonates the thought in these ways. Yet it is but a pathetic dream, until an assurance is reached that God has already declared that mercy in the "Word made Flesh." Buddhism's groping after a merciful Being is a potent argument that the supreme act of God in Christ was a satisfaction of imperious human needs.

2. *Respects in Which Buddhism at Its Best Is Patently Inferior to Christianity*

In contrast with what is said above, it is only fair to enumerate several respects in which Buddhism sets a definitely low and inferior standard as compared with Christianity.

(a) *It Emphasizes Stoical Self-mastery.*—The trend of early Buddhism, as seen in its own Scriptures, is stoical. It sets up a lofty moral ideal, yet offers relatively little assistance in attaining it. Admiration for the Buddha, faith in the system he preached, common sense or enlightened self-interest in accepting the great truth that happiness follows upon goodness,—these furnish the motive power of the Buddhist life. The individual takes care of himself. In theory, at least, there is no god higher than the little local deities who are said to have bowed down before the Buddha. Since, however, they too are subject to *tanhā*, the gods are less admirable and less helpful than he. To some thinkers this stoical self-mastery is the strongest element of Buddhism. "I am the captain of my fate," a good Buddhist would say, "I am the master of my soul." But to one who thinks more deeply, this attitude appears an element of weakness, for everywhere and in all ages the human heart finds no ultimate satisfaction without a belief in some loftier, purer and

stronger being, who is ready to hear and to help. In the Mahāyana Buddhism of the North and Far East such a theology has been developed. The history of Buddhism, in fact, lays a capital basis for Christian apologetics. The missionary who wishes to be able to argue with Southern Buddhists in regard to many of their technically held beliefs should try to be fairly familiar with this other type of Buddhistic thinking, which is really more spiritual.

(b) *It Has Two Standards of Morality.*—A very serious defect of Southern Buddhism is its double standard of morality, one for the layman and the other for the monk. It places the celibate *bhikkhu* (mendicant) on a higher footing than the layman. During the Buddha's own lifetime he was accused of making many homes desolate. This has been a constant criticism in China, where it is a crime not to raise a family, and where Buddhism has yet been obstinately monastic. There have been great exceptions among emperors and other lay-Buddhists, but Buddhism is on the whole a monastic religion. Its true votaries really ought to leave the world. Where they have failed to do so, they have been, to some extent inconsistent.

(c) *It Has a Low Estimate of Womanhood.*—Another alleged weakness which will especially interest those who are entering upon the careful study of non-Christian religions at the present time is the relatively low place which the Buddhist system, at least in theory, gives to women. While in practice, as has been pointed out earlier, the women of Burma are the better half of the population, yet in strict theory they are not human beings at all. They are less than human; only he who takes the yellow robe, and becomes for a time a monk, can reach the status of full-orbed humanity. Gotama said many severe things about men; the two sexes, he taught, are a snare to one another, but he did not fail to add that women are the worse. A Sinhalese Christian pastor, praying for power

to resist the devil, added: "And all *her* works!" and women are in fact so described in many passages of the Buddhist books. Love and lust are not distinguished as they are in Christianity. Here is one supreme service that Jesus rendered to humanity; he made family life a sacred thing, lifted womanhood to honor and sanctity, and rescued women and little children from abuse and scorn. Buddhism, concerned chiefly with the monastic life of meditation, has not much to say about the family. It does not teach the fatherhood of God, from whom "all families are named," though, after some six centuries, it developed this conception of the Divine. In China and Japan Buddhistic teaching is greatly reinforced by the teaching of Confucius. It survives by reason of what that has added. Buddhism, in its origin, if the canon truly represents Gotama, was a stoical agnosticism which ignored the gods, and bade men rely upon themselves in following the path of goodness which leads to happiness. Because it thus ignored the deepest instincts of humanity, first by turning the thoughts of men away from God, and again by glorifying celibacy, these instincts, refusing to be snubbed, have taken a sweeping revenge, so that today Buddhism survives in large measure because of the very teachings it has been compelled to adopt in the process of molding itself "nearer to the heart's desire."

This may be illustrated in two ways. *Nibbāna*, originally at best an ideal of negative, solitary bliss, has been replaced by an ideal of social life hereafter, which, among the Buddhists of Southern Asia, has entirely supplanted the original idea. Moreover, among them faith in self-mastery has also given place to prayers for help; or, among the very conservative, to the belief that there is a store of merit gained by the sacrificial life of the Buddhas throughout the ages which may be tapped by the faithful.

Buddhism has thus passed through a tremendous adjustment, quite clear to any careful student who has given close attention to the history of Buddhism in Southern Asia. Such an one need only compare, for example, the simple, austere teachings of the *Dhammapada* with those of the *Saddharma Pundarika*¹ or “Lotus of the True Law,” which represent the *Mahāyāna* to realise how great have been the changes in Buddhism,—and it is changing even in its *Hinayāna* form.

¹ See “Sacred Books of the East,” Vol. XXI, No. 18 in the bibliography.

VII

THE MISSIONARY APPROACH TO BUDDHISM IN SOUTHERN ASIA

It has already been clearly stated that the full strength of Buddhism can hardly be understood by one who knows Southern Buddhism only. The *Mahāyāna* type, as worked out in China and Japan, may be regarded as more developed than that of Burma and Ceylon. The missionary, therefore, who seeks to carry Christianity to any Buddhist people, must try to make himself familiar with the wide-ranging development of Buddhism.

It is evident that Buddhism in Southern Asia has aspects both good and bad. In what has been written previously these characteristics have been emphasized which explain its continuing power as a religion. Buddhism is not mainly a philosophy and it will never be overthrown by a merely intellectual approach, however masterly. A missionary, while he must be intellectually competent, must also carry a real gospel, and live a life of contagious enthusiasm in service. To those who face this great task the following considerations may be suggested.

1. *The Buddhism With Which Missionaries Deal Is Not the Theoretical Buddhism of Gotama*

It must not be forgotten that there is a marked difference between the theoretical Buddhism of early days, reflected in the standard literature of Buddhism, and the Buddhism of the present day in Southern Asia. The Buddhism which some Western enthusiasts are eager to

introduce into their own countries is something which they have learned from Buddhist books rather than from the people of Buddhist lands. Captivated, at first, it may be, by the beauty of some isolated saying, or, possibly, deeply touched during some moonlight scene near the great pagodas of Burma or on the hillsides of Ceylon, they become eager and even learned students of the Buddhism of Gotama. Those who are sincere among them, however, have to declare with sadness that the great bulk of the people who profess Buddhism have wandered very far from its principles and practices. Real Buddhism is too austere and difficult for ordinary human nature.

2. *Its Central Emphasis Varies in the Three Southern Countries*

Not only does Buddhism, as the missionary comes in contact with it, vary markedly from theoretical Buddhism, but the central emphasis varies in different parts, even of Southern Asia. The earnest student must know his country and its people in order to know their Buddhism. Nothing, for instance, can be further from the sunny temperament of the Burmese than the central truth of Buddhism that "all is sorrowful." It is a strange perversion of the truth which claims, as some Western writers have claimed, that the Burmese are optimistic because they are free from *tanhā*. The fact that they have come to believe in a good Buddha as a living god has something to do with it, and natural temperament has even more. They are Burmese first and Buddhists afterward; Buddhism tends to adapt itself to their nature.

In Ceylon, while Buddhist ideals are better suited to the more melancholy temperament of the people, yet people and monks are acutely conscious of their powerlessness unaided to gain a victory over sin and sorrow. As in Japan and China, so to a lesser degree in Burma and

Ceylon, Buddhism has been virtually forced to substitute the ideas of a savior and of salvation by faith for the idea of salvation through merit. This fact is full of encouragement and suggestion for the Christian missionary. If the mythical Kwanyin and the far-off Metteya can captivate hungry human hearts, why may not the historic Jesus be enthroned in their stead? He is a far more real, more winsome, more arresting and more majestic figure than those greatly loved beings of whom Gotama is the prototype and human need the begetter. The acceptance of the Christian idea carries this process of spiritual growth to a real conclusion. The wise missionary will seek such points of contact as he may find in the Bodhisattva ideal of vicarious sacrifice, in prayer as his people practice it, in their yearning for peace and in their hope of a heaven.

3. *The Qualities of Missionaries to Southern Asia*

The life of a true missionary to Southern Buddhists is surely full of interest and variety. Each of these peoples has many attractive qualities and a long history; a life spent among them will have its rewards, attractions, and assurances. The type of man or woman best fitted to bring home the good news of the Christian message to either people cannot be rigidly defined. Some traits, however, may confidently be stressed as indispensable.

(a) *Clear Christian Convictions*.—What these peoples most need is a true gospel of the abounding life, a message which emphasizes the fatherhood of God, and a demonstration of fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ, the Savior. This message must be lived far more than talked about. The successful missionary, in addition to having a clear understanding of the essential content of his message, should have a passionate loyalty to Christ, a firm conviction of His right to claim these attractive peoples, and of His power to make them truly great, and a willing-

ness to enter sacrificially upon the task of drawing them to Him. No other equipment will make the missionary adequate to his difficult task.

(b) *A Willingness to Appreciate New Aspects of Old Truth.*—It is very desirable that the missionary should face such a people, themselves creative in their past thinking, with the firm belief that the Holy Spirit has guided nations in their persistent search for truth and is still seeking to lead them on into fresh realization of the power and meaning of the truths which have meant so much in past ages. He will be sustained in his contact with the inner soul of the people to whom he goes, not alone by the hope that they will find in Christ hitherto undiscovered riches, but also by the expectation that through their religious genius and past experiences there may develop a deeper insight into the revelation of Christ for and through His Church.

(c) *An Attitude of Sympathy.*—A missionary will make very little impression in Buddhist countries upon the people, and especially upon their leaders, who is unable to put himself, to some extent, sympathetically into their point of view, so as to be able to be friendly toward the better aspects of their life and beliefs. There are many things which are “lovely and of good report.” A spirit of true friendliness goes far towards establishing good relations with the people. The newcomer to Oriental lands finds it no easy task to meet the people on their own ground without exhibiting a spirit of patronage. But he will discover much that merits respect and should always keep himself in a teachable frame of mind. He is among them as a student and learner as well as a teacher and guide.

(d) *A Sense of Beauty and of Humor.*—These peoples are lovers of beauty and enjoy humor; they respond readily to these qualities in the missionary. Not

a few Westerners need to develop the æsthetic faculty and the imagination. Some people are unfortunately so deeply in earnest that they have no gift of humor. They see nothing in its best light. They can never pass over troubles lightly. They are forever misconceiving motives, remarks and ideals with a result which is often tragic. Such people had better avoid Southern Asia and the career of a missionary.

4. *The Greatness of the Opportunity*

God's Kingdom will not be complete without the peoples of Southern Asia. They are deeply religious in temperament. They have had a truly great past. One who works among them may reasonably find encouragement and inspiration in the growing conviction that the type of Christianity which develops among them will be a definite source of strength to the Church universal. It may be no idle dream that God will grant to some missionary of today the privilege of training a St. Paul or an Origen or an Augustine of the East who will give to the Church another great chapter of Christian interpretation and to the Oriental world a truly convincing apologetic of the gospel. Our Christian civilization is challenged today by many voices and from many sides. Fresh light is needed from the East with its idealism and devotion to the Unseen. A Christian Orient will mean great things to the world, far greater even than a Christian Occident has meant. Moreover, while the imagination is stirred by the thought of the richness of the gifts which have been given to the Oriental world by reason of Buddha's "enlightenment" more than two thousand years ago, the teachings of Jesus Christ are sure to carry the East, as well as the West, to a fuller and truer completeness of life. With confidence the missionary may build his share of an Eastern Church of which Christ is the Head, yet to which Gotama Buddha has

made notable gifts. His is a noble calling as a fellow-worker with God at His age-long task of winning mankind to allegiance and friendship and of building the whole human race into His likeness.

APPENDIX I

HINTS FOR PRELIMINARY READING ON BUDDHISM IN SOUTHERN ASIA

No reading or study can take the place of friendly intercourse with Buddhists in their temples and homes in giving a student of Buddhism an adequate impression of what it means to its adherents. Yet those who wish to gain a knowledge of Buddhism as a religion, especially those who hope to go as missionaries or as students to Southern Asia, may wisely take certain earlier steps toward the comprehension of the background of history which modern Buddhism implies.

Such a student should, first of all, try to gain a clear conception of the life of the Buddha, of his work as a moral reformer and of the secret of his amazing influence. Sir Edwin Arnold's well-known *Light of Asia* (No. 1 of the Bibliography) is well worth reading, if read as a legendary rather than a historical account. It gives one a Buddhist atmosphere and an enthusiasm for Sākyamuni. A recent and sufficiently comprehensive study of the Buddha is that by Saunders, *Gotama Buddha* (No. 26). For other references, see the bibliography.

Following this study, the student should saturate himself in some short summary of the moral teachings of the Buddha, such as the *Dhammapada*. A convenient edition is by Wāgīswara and Saunders, *The Buddha's Way of Virtue* (No. 33).

Then it will be well to read some of the *Jātakas* or birth stories, which express in folklore form, after the method of Æsop's fables, the ideas of *kamma* or rebirth. A good edition is that by Francis and Thomas (No. 10). A good introduction to Buddhist doctrine in general is Saunders' *The Heart of Buddhism* (No. 27). A comprehensive study of early Buddhism is found in Warren's *Buddhism in Translations* (No. 34). It should be in every careful student's library for constant reference.

It is also desirable that every student should gain a fair idea of the place of Buddhism in the civilization of the East. Saunders' *The Story of Buddhism* (No. 28) will afford some impression. Hackmann's *Buddhism as a Religion* (No. 13) is more detailed.

Visitors to the Orient will wish to have a little fore-knowledge of the specific country to which they are to go. In regard to Ceylon, Copleston's *Buddhism, Primitive and Present* (No. 3) is a standard book. It ought to be found in any good university library. Gogerly's scholarly work (No. 11) is not common in American libraries, but is very valuable. Bigandet's *Life and Legend of Gaudama* (No. 2) treats Burmese Buddhism thoroughly. In the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (No. 16), found in every good library, the Buddhism of each country is treated under the proper heading, as well as almost every phase of Buddhist thinking.

Finally, it may be added that one who plans to enter upon the "noble path" of religious service in Southern Asia and seeks to develop a fitness to interpret Christianity to the peoples they may profitably study the report on the *Presentation of Christianity to Buddhists* (No. 22), which it is hoped, will be published by the end of the year 1923.

APPENDIX II

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